IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims replaces all prior listings and versions of the claims in the present application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A surface pressure applying device for a slide valve that includes ~~comprises:~~ a housing [[(1)]] fixed to a bottom surface of a molten metal vessel [[(2)]]; a clamp [[(3)]] supportedly provided to the housing [[(1)]] in a manner that allows the clamp [[(3)]] to open and close; and a slide case [[(5)]] housed movably within the clamp [[(3)]] and connected to plate driving means [[(4)]], the housing [[(1)]], the clamp [[(3)]], and the slide case [[(5)]] forming a space [[(6)]] in which at least two plate bricks ~~(a first plate brick (7) and a second plate brick (8))~~ are installed, the plate driving means [[(4)]] causing one of the plate bricks [[(7, 8)]] to slide to change an opening of each of nozzle holes [[(7a, 8a)]] formed in the plate bricks [[(7, 8)]], respectively, and control the outflow of molten metal, which comprises:

~~characterized by comprising:~~ a pair of spring holders [[(12)]]; surface pressure releasing plates [[(13)]] with projections [[(14)]]; and a surface pressure releasing bar [[(15)]] with a wedge portion [[(16)]], the spring holders [[(12)]] each containing plural compression springs [[(11)]] and flanking the housing [[(1)]] in a direction parallel with a direction in which the slide case [[(5)]] slides, the surface pressure releasing plates [[(13)]] being placed under the spring holders [[(12)]] in a manner that allows the surface pressure releasing plates [[(13)]] to move up and down integrally with the spring holders [[(12)]], the surface pressure releasing bar [[(15)]] being placed between the housing [[(1)]] and the surface pressure releasing plates [[(13)]], the wedge portion [[(16)]] being tapered on a slide contact surface on which the wedge portion [[(16)]] is in slidable contact with the projections [[(14)]] of the surface pressure releasing plates [[(13)]], the projections [[(14)]] and the compression springs

[[(11)]] being arranged such that an arrangement center [[(A)]] of peaks of the projections [[(14)]] coincides with an arrangement center [[(B)]] of the compression springs [[(11)]], and

~~characterized in that~~ wherein the surface pressure releasing bar [[(15)]] is slid while connected to the plate driving means [[(4)]] by a connecting pin [[(22)]], to lift or depress the surface pressure releasing plates [[(13)]] and thereby release or apply surface pressure, the spring holders [[(12)]] being equipped with surface pressure applying hooks [[(20)]] for engaging with the clamp [[(3)]] when the surface pressure is applied and disengaging from the clamp [[(3)]] when the surface pressure is released.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): The surface pressure applying device for a slide valve according to Claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the projections [[(14)]] comprise rollers.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): The surface pressure applying device for a slide valve according to Claim 1, ~~or 2, characterized by~~ further comprising upper rollers [[(30)]] provided on a lower surface of the housing [[(1)]] in opposition to the projections [[(14)]] in a manner in which the upper rollers [[(30)]] is in slidable contact with the surface pressure releasing bar [[(15)]].

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): The surface pressure applying device for a slide valve according to ~~any one of Claims 1 through 3, characterized in that~~ Claim 1, wherein the plate driving means [[(4)]] is connected to the surface pressure releasing bar [[(15)]] through the connecting pin [[(22)]] which is detachable.